



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

AFGHANISTAN

FIRST PERSON NO SILENCE ON VIOLENCE

**USAID builds a trainer
into a leader.**



USAID/I-PACS

“I want to prove myself a strong and visionary leader unafraid to initiate social and cultural change, not only for WASSA’s staff of 80, but also for Afghanistan.”

- Zahra Hasanpur, Managing Director of Women Activities and Social Services Association in Herat Province.

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Zahra Hasanpur broadcasts her voice bravely and persistently on behalf of marginalized women and girls in Western Afghanistan. Fear and personal safety are attributes she does not discuss in her stance to secure gender equity.

Joining Women Activities and Social Services Association (WASSA) as a trainer in 2005, she had limited experience in teaching English and computer courses. From 2005 to today, her career trajectory was straight up. These formative years were essential for her to understand and embrace advocacy for women’s rights. She dynamically contributed to awareness campaigns, capacity trainings, and conferences at national and international levels. Exposed to eminent activists inside and outside of Afghanistan, she solidified relationships beyond her province of Herat.

With WASSA, she participated in research on violence against women, entitled *Silent Voice*. She voluntarily led the *WE CAN* campaign in the West, a five-year drive for elimination of violence against women.

Zahra oversees WASSA’s contribution to the USAID’s Afghanistan Media Development and Empowerment (AMDEP) and Initiative to Promote Afghan Civil Society (I-PACS II) projects. “USAID projects deepened my expertise and motivated me to assertively promote gender related activities,” Zahra remarked.

As her responsibilities for WASSA grew, so did her confidence. Zahra attended UNDP’s conference on HIV AIDs and Trafficking in Sri Lanka, studied engendering microeconomics at Miryam College in the Philippines, participated in an Armenian study tour, and joined USAID’s I-PACS Gender Focal Point on the 2010 India Gender Study tour.

Her commitment to WASSA and to the people of Western Afghanistan and her ability to work across all programs, sectors and social classes motivated WASSA’s Advisory Board to nominate Zahra as their leader, and thus electing her on November 15, 2010 as Managing Director. “At the end of the day, I’ve been able to prove to myself that I’ve got what it takes to be a leader,” said Zahra.